

“See, O Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of [David] . . . to rule over Israel, your servant. . . . And he shall be a righteous king . . . and there shall be no injustice in his days . . . for all shall be holy, and their king the anointed of the Lord.”ⁱ Expectations ran high that God would send a messiah to restore Israel to its former glory. With this air of excitement, people hoped that the occupying Roman forces would be overthrown, temple worship would be renewed, and peace would come to the land.

When Jesus asks, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” (Luke 9:18), it is not an idle question. The Prophet Malachi had foretold, “Now I am sending to you Elijah the prophet, before the day of the LORD comes” (3:23). Thus, the answer by the disciples is an honest read of the crowds. “They said in reply, ‘John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, one of the ancient prophets has arisen’” (Lk 9:19).

Jesus wanted to know more than what was on the mind of the crowds, so he asks Peter point blank “But who do you say that I am?” Peter said in reply, “The Messiah of God” (Lk 9:20). Like Moses of old, Jesus provides an abundance of manna from God. (He had just fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fish). Jesus is from the royal line of King David and he is a prophetic Messiah who works miracles.ⁱⁱ

“Who do you say that I am?” Messiah of God is also the Son of God. The Angel Gabriel told us, “This child is savior, Messiah, and Lord” (Note to Lk 2:11). Jesus rescues humanity from sin and delivers us from the alienation from God. Jesus is the Christ. He is the “anointed one.” Jesus brings salvation to all, both Jew and Gentile.

When Jesus asks, “Who do you say that I am?” he is also addressing us. He has conquered sin and death by offering his life for our salvation. It is easy to forget this amidst our worries and concerns. We worry over the ongoing pandemic. We shake our heads at the gridlock of our national government. We are frustrated with the limitations of science to defeat the virus.

Like Jesus who prayed in solitude, we need to ponder the question. In the silence of prayer, God can calm our worries and shed light on the path forward. Gaze upon the cross to see the deep and abiding love that our suffering savior has for each one of us. “Who do you say that I am?”

ⁱ Gadenz, Pablo T. The Gospel of Luke. P. 178. From the Psalms of Solomon, written in the first century BC and not part of the Bible.

ⁱⁱ Ibid 180.